

Don Thompson
Education Committee Testimony

Regarding School Construction Funds for Charter School & Support for HB 5283 & SB 229

Friday, March 4th, 2022

Good evening members of the Education Committee and thank you for your time this evening. My name is Don Thompson and I am a parent and lifelong resident of Waterbury. Additionally, I am the President of StayWell Health Center in Waterbury. We provide medical, dental, behavioral health and substance abuse services to 24,000 patients living in the Greater Waterbury Area. I am also a member of the board of directors at Brass City Charter School and here today to advocate for students in my community.

All public schools in my community, including Brass City, need and deserve more resources and support, especially while they continue to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. For far too long students have suffered due to inequitable and unjust funding systems. At a time when our state is in a strong financial position with a surplus of \$2.5 billion dollars, I ask that this committee stand by our students and implement a single student-centered funding formula that addresses the growing racial funding gap and ensures that our schools are able to continue providing quality resources to students even after the ESSER funds run out.

I know that throughout this pandemic you and your fellow legislators have been working to keep our students and schools safe by providing communities with up-to-date information on the status of the virus and working to maintain in-person learning. At StayWell Health Center, we are also committed to the health and safety of students and schools. We have provided 15,500 pop-up Covid-19 tests, 12,000 Covid-19 vaccines and we operate 3 school-based health clinics in Waterbury.

Brass City Charter School is housed in the former St. Margaret's parish. Two of my children attended the former school and we were parishioners. I have lived on the same street as the school for 35 years and it is heartening to see the old parish property transformed into a campus of learning, serving a population in need. Brass City Charter School has done a lot of renovations to the old parish to make it safe and modern for our students. However, the lack of reliable access to funds for maintaining and improving our facilities creates a great deal of challenges in keeping up the property. This year please pass a budget that includes access to facilities funding for our charter schools so that Connecticut children never have to miss a day of school due to preventable facilities issues.

In closing, I ask this committee to please continue your support of all public schools and the children they serve by passing a budget that includes increased access to facilities funds for charter schools and a single student-centered funding formula inclusive of public charter school students and their needs. Thank you for your time.

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